

The Three Crosses and What They Signify to You and Me

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Like 23, 24, and 25, when I came to the place which is called Calvary there they crucified him and the malefactor, one on the right hand and one on the left.

Jesus of Nazareth was not only associated with the poor while here on earth, but all through his life he was associating himself with the lowly and sinners. The greatest fault that the Pharisees and the Pharisees of the religiousists of the day found with Jesus was the fact that he associated himself with publicans and sinners. Christ is and has always been the sinner's friend. Luke 7:34. "The Son of Man is come eating and drinking and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Not only through his life, but in his death as well, was he the friend of sinners, for our text says, "When they were come to the place which was called Calvary, they crucified him and the malefactor, one on the right and one on the left."

Pictures the Crucifixion.

We have set before us in this text three crosses on one the impudent thief, on the second the Son of God, on the third the penitent thief. This world has never been the same since those three crosses were raised upon Calvary, especially the cross of Christ. The cross stands as the central figure of history and just as it divided the two thieves, so it goes on with its work of the division. On one side we often see the husband and the other the wife and the cross standing between them. On one side the parents and on the other the children, and the cross between. On one side one group of friends, on the other another, and the cross of Christ between. The most serious part of it all, it not only stands between them now but will continue to do so through endless eternity. I want to call attention to the three persons on the three crosses and their different relations to sin. One was dying in sin, one was dying for sin, one was dying to sin, becoming dead to the guilt and power of sin.

I want to use the three crosses that I may be better able to make clear to you the meaning of the death of the one on the center cross. First, let us stop in front of the unbelieving thief as he seems to be the first speaker. We hear him saying in the 39th verse, "And one of the malefactors, which was hanged on him saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." You say, "What a strange thing that man did, calling on the Son of God, with the agonies of death upon him." Yes, a very strange thing it was indeed. It seems as if he would have been willing like the drowning man, to have grabbed at the faintest possibility that he was the Son of God. But men of the world often do some strange things when it comes to the matter of their soul's salvation.

What brought repentance to the other thief seems to have hardened this one. There they both hung, and in one it produced repentance and in the other hardness of heart. The gospel is doing two things wherever it is preached. It brings repentance to those who accept it; it hardens those who reject it. A gospel-hardened sinner is the most pitiful sight that any Christian worker is called to look upon. He may be morally all right or deep in sin. That has nothing to do with it. It is his attitude toward Jesus.

Eyes Are Blinded.

What opened another man's eyes to his lost condition seems to have blinded this one. 2 Cor. 4:3-4. "And if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing. In whom the god of this world (that is the devil) has blinded the minds of the unbelieving lest the light of the glory of the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should dawn upon them." Many see beauty in Christ, and it is because the devil has blinded their eyes. But there is a sad day of awakening coming when all eyes will be opened to their lost condition.

Now we come to the one on the center cross. The one dying for sin. While the one on the first cross has sin in his heart and the guilt of sin upon him, the one on the center cross was absolutely without sin. 1 John 3:5. "And ye know that he was manifested to take away sin, and in him is no sin." 1 Peter 2:22. "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." While we see there was no sin in Christ, he was absolutely sinless, yet he had the sin of the world upon him. Isa. 53:6. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way. But the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." 1 Peter 2:24. "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body to sin, should live unto righteousness. By whose stripes ye were healed." While there was no sin in Christ, the sin of the whole world was made to meet on him, and he bore them all on the tree, and do you say then, if he has borne the sins of all, won't I be saved, anyway, whether I make any effort or not? Indeed you will not. If you were in prison, and a governor should sign a pardon setting you free, it would do you no good unless you accepted it. You have been redeemed. Your pardon was sealed by the blood of Jesus, but you reject

it. All men are condemned in the sense that Jesus died for all, but all men are not saved because they will not accept the pardon.

Heart Was Broken.

Jesus died of a broken heart. Luke 22:22. "Jesus died of his physical suffering, excruciating as that was, but literally of a broken heart. He would have died of the stroke of grief, and anyone looking at the burden he bore they—such the sin of the world. By comparing scripture with scripture, we find that Jesus died literally of a broken heart. Luke 22:24. "And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." What was Jesus praying for? That he might escape the cross? I do not believe it. For he said, on another occasion, "For this purpose came I into the world." Matthew and Mark both tell us that as Jesus suffered the agony he said, "My soul be exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. Jesus prayed that the cup might pass from him. What cup—the death of the cross? No, but that he should not die there in agony. Was this prayer answered? Heb. 5:7 says it was. "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death and was heard in that he feared." This reference fits the Gethsemane experience of Jesus and says that his prayer was answered. Luke 22:43. "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him." We have a remarkable passage of scripture in John's gospel, the 19th chapter, 23rd to the 35th verses. "But when they came to Jesus they saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs, but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side and forthwith came there out blood and water and he that saw it bore record, and his record is true."

When the body of Jesus was pierced there came forth blood and water. This scene of the later years has proven, will take place when the body of one who has died of a broken heart is pierced. The walls of his heart simply burst under the burden he bore. He was forsaken of man. "He came unto his own and his own received him not." He was forsaken of God. In other words, he was tasting the pains of the eternal world for us. He, the sinless one, was bearing the penalty of sin. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," so he was tasting eternal death for us. About the ninth hour he cried, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Another observation: There was

one at last in that great crowd kneeling around the cross that knew what the death of Jesus meant, and that was Harabab. There had been three crosses prepared. Three malefactors were to be crucified. Plate said, "And whom should I release unto you?" The people asked for Harabab. Harabab was in the crowd with the other malefactors. We can imagine with what great surprise he accepted his freedom. He joined the great crowd of justifying, pardoning humanity. After the three crosses were lifted up, we can imagine some one of his friends coming and putting his hands on the shoulder of Harabab and saying, "Who is that man on the center cross? I know that one on the left and the one on the right, but who is the other?" Harabab might easily have answered, "I do not know, but I know why he is there—he is there in my place—because that cross was prepared for me." As surely as Harabab could say that Jesus was there in his place, so can we say the same. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." That was the penalty for sin, and he was bearing it in our place. That was the work of Jesus in his own body on the tree.

The Penitent Thief.

Let us stop in front of the third cross bearing the one dying to sin. The two malefactors went to the cross for the same offense. It may be they were companions in crime, but the two went to the cross and saw and heard the same things; one is today in hell and the other in heaven. Why is one in hell, he same he is a malefactor? No. The other was a malefactor and he is in heaven. One is in hell because he rejected Jesus and the other is in heaven because he accepted him regardless of their character. In other words, no man ever went to hell because he was a bad man or to heaven because he was a good man, but where a man spends eternity depends altogether upon what he does with Jesus Christ. John 2:18. "He that believeth on the Son is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not on the name of the only begotten Son of God."

What wrought the great change in the one? First, he feared God. Matthew, in his account, tells us that the people and the chief priests mocked Christ, saying, "He saved others but himself he cannot save," and that the thieves cast the same in his teeth. It would seem that when they went to the cross that they both mocked Jesus, but as this thief watched him there and heard his prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," he began to fear and tremble. Fear is one of the first elements of conversion. "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." The man or woman who does not fear God is a fool, according to the teaching of scripture.

Second, he confessed his sins. "We indeed are justly punished, for

we receive the due reward of our deeds. Why was David accepted and David rejected? Because David confessed his sins to God, but Saul would not. Men, you can never be saved until you are willing to take your place at the foot of the cross confessing your sins to God. No man has ever been saved that was too proud to do that. "Oh," you say, "that is just a matter of opinion." No, sir, it is a matter of revelation.

Third, this thief not only acknowledged Christ's righteousness, "But this man hath done nothing amiss," but he said unto Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." What marvelous faith. The Jesus look very much like he was going to have a kingdom as he hung there nailed hand and foot to the cross crowned with thorns. Yet this man looked clear beyond the grave and the resurrection to the time when Jesus would have a kingdom.

Took First Opportunity.

Then, this thief did something that I do not believe any man or woman here can do, and that was he accepted Jesus the first opportunity.

Being a thief, he had probably never before heard of Jesus until he heard that howling mob calling him the Son of God in mockery. You have had opportunity after opportunity and have heard of Jesus ever since you were taught to lap the little prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep."

Some of you may be saying I will repent on my death bed like the dying thief. Yes, but your case is not like his—he had not had any other opportunity. Paul said in 1 Cor. 12:2. "No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Remember that repentance is the gift of God, and you put off salvation until the spirit of God ceases to strive with you and you could not repent if you would. "My spirit shall not always strive with you." With all due respect to the feelings of any who have loved ones make a profession on their death beds. I want to say that I have but little faith in the case. As a rule, as a man lives, so shall he die.

Come now and let us reason together. Come now, men, while you have your senses about you, come now while you can reason. If

is no time to think about religion when your brain is muddled because of the fever which is burning you up. Come now and settle this question.

There is not a man or woman in this city but what expects to be saved sometime, but many of you never will be. And why? Because of procrastination. You think it will be easier some day. Procrastination sends more people to hell than anything else in the world.

OBJECTS TO WAX EXHIBIT

Accused Murderer Brings Suit Against Proprietor of Show.

CARLISLE, March 18.—The courts here have been asked to decide the novel question whether a waxwork showman is guilty of libel for placing in the exhibition a model of a man acquitted on a charge of wife murder.

The libel developed as an after-math of a sensational trial in which Harold Greenwood, a salaried man, the central figure. His likeness, shortly after the trial ended, ap-

peared in a Cardiff exhibition. It occupies a prominent place among similar figures of Lloyd George, and other notables of the day, but is labeled simply, "Mr. Harold Greenwood."

REUNION OF FIVE BROTHERS

Whole Family Served Through Civil War With Confederates.

RICHMOND, Va., April 16.—Five brothers, all of whom served in the Confederate army, recently attended a reunion of their comrades in Christiansburg. They are: Adolph Moore, 83, of Spanishburg, W. Va.; Mansfield M. Moore, 86, of Cambria, Va.; O. M. Moore, 78, of Elliston, Va.; E. T. Moore, 75, of Bradshaw, Va.; and Benjamin Moore, 73, of Shawsville, Va.

The two oldest of the Moore brothers have about 70 descendants each and the third is childless. They are probably the only five brothers, natives of Virginia, still living, who served in the civil war.

CLAIMS YOUNGEST VETERAN

Fort Scott Has Boy Who Enlisted When Only Aged 14.

FORT SCOTT, Kan., April 16.—Fort Scott's claims to the youngest veteran of the world war is disputed. Herman Lange of this city, who was but 14 when he enlisted, had a letter from Mrs. Joe Walter of Cassett, Ind., to a local newspaper stating that her son, Leo L. Madden, enlisted and went overseas at the age of 13 with the Rainbow division and was at the front 18 months with the 150th field artillery.

He sailed for France August 22, 1917, and he was not 14 years old until October 19 of that year, according to his mother. After coming home young Leo re-enlisted and was sent to Camp Grant, Ill., where he is stationed with the 52nd Infantry.

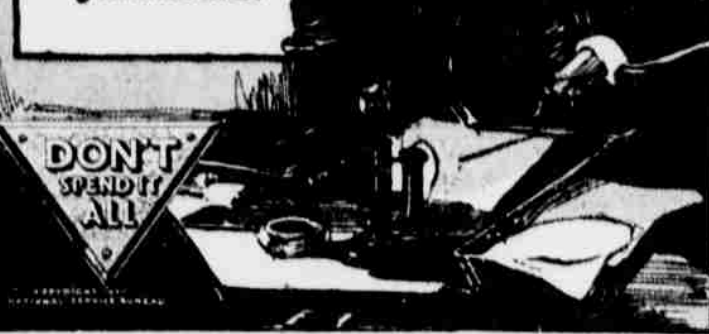
Spain is planning to drain and reclaim for agriculture nearly 1,000 acres of land near the mouth of the Guadalquivir river, the work requiring nearly 10 years.

Your "Silent Partner"—

With you in spirit, every waking moment is your wife. Her life is wrapped up in your success. Who else so sincerely wants you to win?

Who therefore takes so keen an interest in your savings account, measure of your progress?

Save regularly because of her and all else you hold dear.



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The Latest in TONE Reproduction
If you appreciate TONE, TRUE and NATURAL you'll be delighted with this supreme

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Most miles per dollar is the pledge of service on which the structure of the Firestone Organization was reared.

It is beyond any fluctuating policy and is bigger than any program.

This explains the rally of new dealers everywhere to the Firestone standard. They who have weathered the recent difficult period are determined to play safe in the future. They are wide awake to the value in Firestone stability.

They want the Firestone strength behind them.

They know that the pledge of most miles per dollar is much more than a slogan—it is a guiding principle which has enabled the Firestone Organization to grow steadily and surely; to accumulate the fund of resources which is a tower of strength in time of trouble.

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Firestone

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